

# COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

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## LONDON COMMON COUNCIL.

### MEETING REGARDING THE PROPERTY TAX.

At this Meeting the following Resolutions were agreed to, which have since been published in the usual form, and on the debate on which resolutions, after inserting them, I shall submit some remarks to the reader:—

BIRCH, MAYOR.

A COMMON COUNCIL, holden in the Chamber of the Guildhall of the City of London, on Friday, the 9th day of December, 1814;

Resolved unanimously, That it appears to this Court that the Tax upon Income, commonly called the Property Tax, was, under circumstances of peculiar national difficulty, resorted to as a War Tax only, and its enactment accompanied with the most solemn provisions that the same should finally cease at a limited period, after the termination of the then existing hostilities.

Resolved unanimously, That this Court has nevertheless strong reasons to apprehend that it is in the contemplation of his Majesty's Ministers to attempt the continuation or renewal of the said Tax, after its legal expiration, on the 6th day of April next.

Resolved unanimously, That this Court did, upon the first introduction of the Tax, declare, and has since repeatedly expressed their abhorrence of a system which appeared to them no less partial and oppressive in its operation, than repugnant to the free principles of the British Constitution—partial and oppressive, inasmuch as no distinction is made between Annuities, the precarious and fluctuating incomes arising from Trade and other uncertain sources, and the Incomes derived from fixed and permanent property—repugnant to the free principles of the British Constitution, inasmuch as it establishes an odious and inquisitorial tribunal of Commissioners, before whom individuals are compelled to submit to the most degrading exposure of their private concerns and circumstances, and against whose arbitrary decisions, however unjust, they have neither remedy nor appeal.

Resolved unanimously, That, without attempting to detail the numerous evils resulting from

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such a system, it is evident that, rather than undergo such an exposure of their affairs, persons in an embarrassed or insolvent state will necessarily submit to any assessment, however unjust, to the great injury of their creditors, and the utter ruin of themselves and families.

Resolved unanimously, That the nature and character of such an Inquisition cannot be better described than on the authority of the Author of the Wealth of Nations, who observes, that "an inquisition into every man's private circumstances, and an inquisition which, in order to accommodate the Tax to them, watched over all the fluctuations of his fortune, would be a source of such continual and endless vexation as no people could support."

Resolved unanimously, That experience has sufficiently evinced the truth of this opinion, and such has been the vexation, injustice and oppression, resulting from the arbitrary and rigorous exactions under this novel and hateful system, that it has at length become altogether insupportable.

Resolved unanimously, That the continuance of such a system, under any modifications, more especially at a time when the people are anxiously looking for relief from the burthens and privations of war, and with equal anxiety anticipating reform and retrenchment in the national expenditure, would, in the opinion of this Court, be highly irritating, and no less dangerous to the State than harassing and oppressive to the people.

Resolved unanimously, That a Petition be presented to the Hon. the House of Commons, praying them to reject any proposition that may be introduced for the purpose of continuing or renewing, under any modification, the said Tax on Property.

Resolved unanimously, That this Court do earnestly recommend that Meetings be held in the several Wards throughout this city, for the purpose of petitioning Parliament against the continuance or renewal of the said Tax.

Resolved unanimously, That this Court do also recommend that Meetings be held in all the different counties, cities, and towns throughout the kingdom, for the same purpose.

And a draft of a Petition, prepared agreeably to the foregoing Resolutions, was read, agreed to, and ordered to be fairly transcribed, and

B A



signed by the Town Clerk, and presented to the Honourable House of Commons by the Sheriffs, attended by the Remembrancer.

Resolved unanimously, That this Court doth request the Representatives of this City, and such other Members of this Court as have seats in Parliament, to support the prayer of the said Petition in the Honourable House of Commons.

WOODTHORPE.

#### LETTER IV.

#### TO THE EARL OF LIVERPOOL,

#### ON THE AMERICAN WAR.

MY LORD,—The Resolutions in the Common Council were moved by Mr. Waithman, who, in a very clear and strong manner, described the principle and practice of the *Property Tax*; and Mr. Alderman Wood gave a horrid instance of its operation. But it was not 'till Mr. Alderman Heygate spoke that the right string was touched. He said that the *American war* was the cause of the continuation of the tax; and that the people ought to petition against that continuation. He was deceived as to the new objects of the war. He does not appear to know any thing about those "*maritime rights*," of which he talked. The Americans have denied us *no maritime right*; that is to say, nothing that any writer on public law; nothing that any usage of nations; nothing that any principle, any maxim, any practice even of *our own*, at any former period, has held forth as a *right*. Therefore, the *object* of the war is now as good, at least, as it ever was; and, indeed, it is now *not* in opposition to any principle of public law, it being clear, that we have a *right* to make conquests in America, if we have but the *might*. The "*Whigs*," then, must not think to shuffle off to the other side, and to be thought consistent in opposing the war (which they at first pledged themselves to support), upon the ground, that its *object has been changed*. If it has been changed, it has been changed for the *better*; from the right of *impressment* to the right of *conquest*.

But, my Lord, the speech, in this debate, which is most worthy of notice, is that of Sir William Curtis, Knight and Alderman; or, I believe, faith, a Baronet. He said, that he wished for peace with the Americans, but not 'till they had been "*confoundedly well FLOGGED*." This sentiment of Sir William has given rise to a *jeu d'esprit* of a correspondent,

which *jeu d'esprit* exhibits pretty correctly the view which the Americans will take of the matter; I will, therefore, though no admirer of doggerel, insert it by way of note\*. But, my Lord, this was no act of *folly* in the Baronet. He knew well what he was about. Sir William Curtis is *no fool*. He is, perhaps, as much the *opposite* of a fool as any man in England. He knew, that this seemingly-blundering phrase was the very thing to hit the taste of the far greater part of his audience; and, while they were "*laughing*" (as it is said) at it, he was, in his sleeve, laughing at *them*. He sees, as clearly as you and I, that there is very little chance of our beating the Yankees; but he sees, that it is the folly of the day, to speak of them with contempt, and it answers his purpose to indulge the sentiment as much as he can without prejudice to his future election. That man, who gives his support to the Property Tax, even at this day, and yet contrives, that those who so bitterly complain of it, shall call him "*honest Will Curtis*," is *no fool*, my Lord; but, on the contrary, an uncommonly discerning and adroit fellow.

It is now said, that we have *relaxed* in our demands on America, and that *peace* is at hand. I hope it is, with all my heart; but we must not only *relax*; we must give up *all* demands, before we shall have peace. I foresee the likelihood of our attempting to claim the *accomplishment of the object* of the war, if peace be made without our *formally* giving up our claim of *right to impress people on board of American ships on the high seas*. Our putting this claimed right into practice was the sole cause of the war; and, therefore, if peace be made, and this question be passed

#### \* "THE MICE IN COUNCIL."

The Council of Mice (to know what to be at)  
Resolv'd that a bell should be put on the Cat;  
But, when come to the pinch, there was no one  
could tell

How to find out the heroes to put on the bell.  
So, when ALDERMAN WILL (while his neighbour  
he jogg'd)

Made a move to *resolve*, "That the Yankees be  
flogg'd,"

All those look'd about them, who relish'd the  
dash,

To seek for the floggers to lay on the lash;  
But, looking in vain, in a short time the whole  
Of the Council broke up and skipt to their hole.

PUSS.



over in *silence*, we shall, as to the *result* of the war, claim unqualified success; and, I think, I shall hear those same venal writers, who have long told us, that the war was, on our part, a war for *reducing* the Americans to *unconditional submission*; for *deposing* Mr. Madison; for *extinguishing* anarchical Government. I think, I shall hear these same writers assert, that *all we wanted* was to maintain this *maritime right*; and that as the Americans had made peace, without our making any stipulation on the subject, we had *won the object of the war*; and, of course, that the war had been just, necessary, and successful.

Foreseeing this; foreseeing that they will attempt to creep out this way, I, as is the custom with vermin-catchers, shall now beforehand, stop up their hole. The case is this, we stopped American ships on the high seas, in order, as we alleged, to impress our seamen from on board of them; and we not only impressed British subjects but many Republicans along with them. Mr. Madison said we had no right to take *any persons whatever* out of American ships on the high seas; and, after complaining, for years, in vain, he declared war against us, in order to compel us to *cease* this our practice. We were then *at war* with France, and he was a *neutral*. Our war with France has since *ceased*; and, of course, our *impressments* would now have ceased, though he had not gone to war. Our character of *belligerent* and his character of *neutral* ceasing with our war against France, our impressments would also have ceased. If we make peace with him now, and are at war with nobody else, we shall, of course, not impress. The *practice will have ceased*. That is all that he wants. That is *all that he went to war for*. He needs no *stipulation* upon the subject. He has *resisted the practice by force of arms*. The practice *ceases*, and he makes *peace*. It may be said, that we shall, under like circumstances, *revive* the practice; and, if we do, he will *revive* his *resistance*. He is not at war to obtain from us any *acknowledgment* that our practice was unjust; for he does not admit the point to be matter of doubt; and, besides, he knows, that such acknowledgment would be of no use. So that, if we had made peace with him, the moment the French peace had caused the excuse for impressments to cease, the matter would have stood just as it will now stand

without any stipulation on the subject.—Neither party will have given up the point, and yet the war will be at an end, the European peace having *taken out of existence the ground of quarrel*.

What a pity, then, my Lord, that you and your master had not followed my advice, and made peace the moment the European war was at an end! Come, my Lord, be candid towards me, and confess, that, for once, I gave you good advice. By not following that advice, you have got into what is vulgarly called a *hobble*. You now perceive clearly, that to continue the war, is to incur a certain enormous expence, and to expose the country to great danger of further disgrace; while to make peace, as the conflict now stands, is really to be *beaten*; and, what is still worse, to have created, by this very war, a most formidable *naval rival*.

Let me now take another article from the *Times* newspaper, that oracle of all the fools in England, whether high or low. It is full of matter for observation, refutation, or ridicule: it is a complete picture of the mass of the public mind upon this subject: a mixture of folly, spite, error, and falsehood; and is well worthy of close attention.

“If we could give credit to reports circulated yesterday with much confidence, we should believe that Ministers had sacrificed the glory and the best interests of the country by a premature peace with the Americans, at the moment when the latter are *on the very verge of bankruptcy*. Unfortunately, however, for the credit of this assertion, we at the same time learn, that most active measures are pursuing for detaching from the dominion of the enemy an important part of his territory. Accounts from Bermuda to the 11th ult. inform us, that all the disposable shipping in that quarter have been sent off to the Mississippi. Sir Alexander Cochrane left Halifax at the latter end of October for the same destination: and a large body of troops from Jamaica was expected to assemble at the same point. The American Government has openly manifested such extravagant views of aggrandisement, that our eyes ought to be opened to its measureless ambition; and we ought to curb its excesses in time. It is doubtless with a view to this just and necessary policy, that Government has incurred the expence of such extensive



" military and naval preparations: and it  
 " can hardly be supposed, that whilst they  
 " are so largely sacrificing the national re-  
 " sources with one hand, they will render  
 " the object of the sacrifice altogether null  
 " with the other. Nevertheless, policies,  
 " that peace with America would be signed  
 " before the end of the current month, were  
 " yesterday done in the city so high as 30  
 " guineas to return 100. It was even as-  
 " serted, though without foundation, that  
 " the Preliminaries had been already di-  
 " gested, and received the signatures of  
 " the Commissioners on the 3d instant.  
 " We have, however, *some reason* to be-  
 " lieve that the speculations on this sub-  
 " ject are influenced, in some measure, by  
 " secret information, issued for the most  
 " unworthy purposes, from the hotel of the  
 " American Legation at Ghent. After  
 " what has been seen of the total want of  
 " principle in American statesmen of the  
 " Jeffersonian school, the world would not  
 " be much astonished to learn that one of  
 " the American negociators had turned his  
 " situation to a profitable account, by spe-  
 " culating both at Paris and London on  
 " the result of the negociation. Certain it  
 " is that letters received yesterday from  
 " the French capital, relative to the pro-  
 " ceedings at Ghent, contain intimations  
 " like those which have been circulated  
 " here on American authority, viz. that the  
 " new proposals of the British will be ac-  
 " ceded to on or before the beginning of the  
 " new year, provided that no better terms  
 " can ere then be obtained.—The *Liverpool*  
 " frigate is arrived at Portsmouth, from  
 " the coast of America, as is his Majesty's  
 " ship *Penelope*, from Halifax. By these  
 " conveyances various and contradictory  
 " intelligence has been received. On the  
 " one hand, it was reported that an armis-  
 " tice had taken place between the troops on  
 " both sides in America: on the other, that  
 " General Drummond had defeated Brown  
 " and Izard with great loss, and forced  
 " them to blow up Fort Erie, and retire  
 " with the shattered remains of their  
 " forces to Sackett's Harbour. The first of  
 " these reports is altogether unfounded;  
 " the latter is at least premature. At the  
 " date of the last advices Fort Erie con-  
 " tinued in possession of the enemy; but  
 " General Drummond, having received ad-  
 " ditional reinforcements, was expected  
 " soon to make an attack on the position.  
 " Commodore Chauncey's fleet was still

" blockaded in Sackett's Harbour by Sir  
 " James Yeo; but it was not understood that  
 " any attack would be made on that place  
 " by land or water before the winter set in.  
 " Having mentioned our Naval Com-  
 " mander on Lake Ontario, it is but right  
 " to notice that he is to be succeeded in  
 " command by Commodore Owen, as Sir  
 " George Prevost is, at the same time, to  
 " be by Sir George Murray. The compa-  
 " ratively small magnitude of our Lake  
 " squadrons may, perhaps, afford a reason  
 " (or at least an official argument) for not  
 " employing one of our first Admirals on  
 " that service; but why one of the first  
 " Generals that we possess is not charged  
 " with the management of so extremely  
 " important a land war, it is difficult to  
 " guess. The Officer thus mentioned may,  
 " for ought we know, be a person of ability:  
 " certainly his name, to those who remem-  
 " ber Ferrol and Tarragona, cannot but be  
 " rather ominous; but the nation at large  
 " is really indignant at the sort of apathy  
 " displayed on this occasion by Generals of  
 " higher rank and celebrity, who ought  
 " not to have declined the American com-  
 " mand, merely because it did not promise  
 " to be so lucrative as some others. Na-  
 " tional gratitude has perhaps been display-  
 " ed with premature liberality, if those who  
 " have received honours and rewards for  
 " former services are to hold back, in  
 " proud indifference, when their country  
 " once *more needs their presence* in the  
 " field of honour. The American navy  
 " grows under the pressure of a contest  
 " with the greatest naval power that ex-  
 " isted! Paradoxical as this appears, it  
 " is a simple fact; and it proves more  
 " than a thousand arguments the *absolute*  
 " *impossibility there is of our concluding a*  
 " *peace at the present moment, without*  
 " *rendering ourselves the contempt of our*  
 " *antagonists, and the ridicule of all the*  
 " *world besides.* Shall we ALLOW the  
 " *Guerriere* to get to sea with impu-  
 " nity; and to bear to every part of  
 " the world a visible record of our shame,  
 " in that defeat, which entailed on us so  
 " many subsequent disgraces? The new  
 " frigate of that name, mounting 64 guns,  
 " is at Philadelphia, nearly ready for sea.  
 " The *Washington*, another new ship,  
 " carrying 90 guns, is fitting very fast for  
 " sea at Boston: and the *Independence*, of  
 " 98, has been recently constructed at  
 " Portsmouth, in New Hampshire. The



"last mentioned vessel is considered to be  
 "more than a match for the largest man  
 "of war ever built in England. She is  
 "manned with a full complement of 1,000  
 "prime sailors; and what is also of the  
 "utmost consequence, *her weight of metal*  
 "*is far superior to that of any ship in our*  
 "*navy, since her heaviest shot are not less*  
 "*than 68-pounders. When we have received*  
 "*so many melancholy proofs of the effect*  
 "*produced by this superiority in weight of*  
 "*metal, and when we have had no less*  
 "*than two years and a half to profit by*  
 "*the painful lessons, it must indicate ab-*  
 "*solute infatuation, if we have not adopted*  
 "*some measures to place our seamen on*  
 "*an equality with those whom they have*  
 "*to oppose."*

And now, my Lord, how different is this language from that of the speeches, in which the American naval force was described as consisting of "half a dozen fir frigates, with *bits of striped bunting at their mast heads!*" I always said, that this war, if continued for any length of time, would create a *Navy, a formidable Navy, in America*; and is not this creation going on at a great rate? Yet, while this empty fool is exciting our alarms about the Yankee Navy, he is crying out against peace, because Mr. Madison's government is on the "very verge of *bankruptcy.*" Without stopping to observe that this is a servile imitation of the language of "the great Statesman now no more," in the year 1794, as to the state of France, just 20 years before the war with her ended, how stupid must the man be to rely upon the financial difficulties of America, one moment, and the next, represent her as creating a great navy quicker than navy was ever before created! Pray mark the fool, my Lord. He says, that "the American navy grows under the *pressure of the greatest naval power that existed.*" Well, and what is his remedy? To remove the cause? To take off that fecund pressure? No; but precisely the contrary; for, says he, the fact "proves *more than a thousand arguments the absolute impossibility there is of our concluding a peace, at the present moment, without rendering ourselves the contempt of our antagonist, and the ridicule of all the world besides,*" which being interpreted, means, that the American navy having grown hitherto under our pressure, we ought to continue the pressure, in order, to be sure, to make it grow to so

large a size, that we may make peace with it without seeming to yield to an inferior force. If the words have any meaning, this it is.

But, my Lord, the description of the new Yankee ships is false, and wilfully false. It comes, it is said, *from Halifax*, our great naval rendezvous; and is well calculated to provide beforehand for the result of combats, which may take place, or, perhaps, may *not* take place, with the *Washington*, the *Independence*, and the *Guerriere*. I told your Lordship, that the American papers said, that the *Washington* was launched at *Portsmouth*, in New Hampshire; and that she was a 74. Why have these Halifax correspondents swelled her up to a 90 gun ship? I have seen, in the American papers, nothing at all about the *Independence*; but I know, that the official report of the secretary of the American navy, last year, spoke of no larger ships than 74's being on the stocks; and if the American navy-board build 90's and 98's, and charge the people only for 74's, the practice there is widely different from ours. How many guns the *Guerriere* may carry I know not; but I believe the description of her to be as false as that of the other two. But it is but too easy for the world to perceive the  *motive* for these exaggerated descriptions of the force of the American ships; and it cannot fail to produce a very bad impression, with regard to us, amongst the people of America, whose eyes are constantly upon us, and who naturally and justly seize on all attempts of this sort, as subjects of the most poignant ridicule.

As to what this foolish man says about the *future command of our army*, why should he be so very anxious to see "one *of our first Generals*" in Canada? He, who spoke of the American army with so much contempt? And, besides, how does he know, that we have a *better* than Sir George Prevost? In a late number of his paper, this man observed, that a more famous commander was necessary to prevent our men from *deserting*. He said:—"Too deeply have we felt the *disgrace of being beaten by land and water* in the last campaign, to tolerate the chance of similar indignities in the next. Besides, we daily see stronger reasons for a *hot and short war*, when we contemplate the wasteful effect of dilatoriness. Our battalions suffer much from disease, but much more from *desertion*. The temptations to this crime



" which the *Americans offer* are too strong  
 " to be resisted by numbers of our soldiery.  
 " We must not shut our eyes to the *falli-*  
 " *bility of human nature*, to the influence  
 " of example, to the strength of allurements.  
 " The *best, the only way* to keep the sol-  
 " dier to his colours, is to place him under a  
 " commander to whom he can look up *with*  
 " *pride and confidence*, and who will lead  
 " him into active and *continuous service*  
 " throughout a whole campaign."—So,  
 then, the Americans held out temptations,  
 do they? And the remedy is to send a  
 commander that the soldiers shall be proud  
 of, and that shall keep them constantly em-  
 ployed! And this will make them not  
 disposed to yield to the Yankee tempta-  
 tions! I could point out a *better remedy*,  
 my Lord; and if you will engage, that I  
 shall not have my ears cropped off for so  
 doing, you shall have my remedy. As it  
 is, I shall keep it to myself. But what a  
 beast this writer must be, or what beasts  
 must he look upon his readers as being, to  
 talk at this rate! If he were paid by Mr.  
 Madison, he could not serve his cause  
 more effectually than he now does.

I am, &c. &c.

WM. COBBETT.

P. S. The London Common Hall have  
 resolved, that they do not like the *Property*  
*Tax*; but they seem to like the *American*  
*War* very much. I observed to your Lord-  
 ship before, that this was very *unjust*. I  
 do not call it foolish; I do not call it  
 stupid; I call it really *dishonest*. They  
 like the war; they wish to have the war;  
 but they do not like to *pay for it*. It is  
 paltry shuffling to say, that the tax belong-  
 ed solely to the war with *France*. Every  
 man knows, that the American war cannot  
 go on without the tax; and, therefore, to  
 approve of the war is to approve of the tax,  
 as much as the approving of chicken at  
 table is to approve of killing them.

#### FIRE ON MR. COBBETT'S PREMISES.

To the Proprietor of the Times Newspaper.

There is no doubt in my mind, and, I  
 believe, none in that of the public, that the  
 paragraph which you published some time  
 ago, relative to the fire on my premises,  
 and which you took, or pretended to take,  
 out of "a Hampshire Paper," was intend-  
 ed, as it was clearly calculated, to *injure*  
*me with the Insurance Office*. Several of my  
 friends were so fully convinced of this, that

they wrote to me, pressing me to bring an ac-  
 tion against you and your associate calumnia-  
 tor of the Hampshire Paper, which I have  
 since heard is published at that sink of servi-  
 lity and corruption, Portsmouth. My answer  
 was, that I scorned a resort to the law  
 against *any* body, who, however basely,  
 attacked me through the press; and espe-  
 cially against such despicable vermin; and  
 that, besides, I was very sure, that your  
 malignant efforts, if they should have any  
 effect at all with the Insurance Association,  
 would have an effect precisely the contrary  
 of that which it was manifestly your wish  
 to produce. My insurance was with THE  
 UNION LIFE AND FIRE INSURANCE ASSO-  
 CIATION, the chief office of which is at  
 NORWICH. I wrote to the Office an exact  
 description of the premises; told them  
 how the fire happened; ascribed it wholly  
 to the erection of a steaming copper  
 in one of the barns *subsequent to the mak-*  
*ing of the insurance*; told them, that I was  
 aware that I had a very slender, if any  
 legal claim; but, at the same time, used  
 such arguments as suggested themselves to  
 me in support of an *equitable* claim; and  
 offered, if they had any objection to grant  
 this claim, to submit entirely to the deci-  
 sion of a sole arbitrator, chosen by them-  
 selves, from amongst the gentlemen of the  
 Bar in this or any adjoining county, pro-  
 vided that he came to the spot, and exa-  
 mined into all the circumstances.—I do  
 not know, whether your mean malignity  
 had any weight with the Managers; but  
 the fact is, that they chose no arbitrator;  
 they took my word as to the cause of the  
 fire; and, with a very handsome letter  
 from Mr. T. Bignold, their Secretary,  
 through Mr. Wooldrige, their Agent at  
 Winchester, THEY SENT ME THE  
 AMOUNT OF THE WHOLE OF  
 MY CLAIM.—I am afraid that I have  
 been induced to make this public acknow-  
 ledgment of the fairness and liberality of  
 this Institution, not so much from the mo-  
 tive of doing it justice, as from that of  
 shewing, that your malice is incapable of  
 doing harm, where it has to encounter ho-  
 nesty and good sense. I wish all your  
 readers were like the Managers of this In-  
 stitution. We should not then have to la-  
 ment the mischievous effects of your press  
 with regard to the ruinous, and, as you *now*  
 call it, *disgraceful*, war against the Ameri-  
 can Republic. We should not, then, have  
 to lament that a great part of this nation  
 has been, and yet are, so besotted as to be-



lieve, as firmly as they believe in the Incarnation and the Athanasian Creed, that we shall *depose* Mr. Madison, re-colonize the American States, and make them help to pay the National Debt.—Your fellow-labourer at Portsmouth, whose name I have not heard, and the name of whose paper I have forgotten, and all of whose readers have a coarser appetite than some of yours, has gone, in this case, lengths, I am told, to which you, for want of courage and not for want of malignity, have declined to follow him. Not satisfied with giving it to be understood, that I would not suffer the "*honest rustics*" to extinguish the flames, he has, I am told, published, that the thing which I had erected, made the premises what is called "*double hazardous*." As it may be of some use (addressing myself now to the reader), to persons disposed to try the effect of feeding cattle with *cooked*, instead of *raw*, roots, to know the facts, as to this point, I will here state them.—All that is necessary is, to erect a boiler in *just the same way* that a boiler is erected for *brewing* or for *washing*, except that the boiler for steaming has the lid *fastened down*, and has a pipe going out of it, which pipe conducts the steam into the thing containing the roots. The fire-place, the flue, or chimney, every thing else is the same as in the case of a common brewing copper; and, of course, there can be no *more hazardous* in a steaming boiler than in a brewing boiler, or copper. The accident in my case arose thus:—In order to have the roots as near to the place of feeding as possible, the boiler was erected in an old barn, from one end of which ran off, at a right angle, an ox-shed of considerable length. The flue, or chimney, ascended through the *side* of the roof of the barn, but was not so high as the *ridge* of the roof. The covering was thatch, the wind blew hard from the chimney towards the ridge, the weather was, and had long been, very dry, a spark of strong wood fire from the top of the chimney was driven against the thatch, which instantly was in a blaze, flaming fragments of it were driven across the yard (about sixty feet) to another barn, to which the ox-shed was joined at one end, and the cart-house at the other end, other fragments dropped on the ox-shed, others on the stable; so that, in less than ten minutes, the whole of the buildings, forming a hollow square, were in a blaze that was seen in the Isle of Wight. Twenty-three oxen,

twenty hogs, four horses, two asses, all the waggons, carts, ploughs, harness, &c. &c. were saved by a degree of activity and presence of mind, and, indeed, of bravery, in my servants, which was never surpassed, and which not only consoled me for the loss of my buildings, but mitigated the vexation which I naturally felt at the attempts of the "*honest rustics*" of the *Times* newspaper to rob me, and which robbery was only prevented by my enforcing my order of dispersion, which, by occasioning the disappointment of thieves, naturally excited their anger, and as naturally drew forth the malice of the Proprietor of the *Times* newspaper, and his fellow-labourer at Portsmouth.—I chose to insure with the *Norwich Office*, because its terms were the *fairest* that I had ever seen; and, more especially, because I had been informed by several persons, that the Office was in the hands of good men, who were not in the habit of dragging unfortunate sufferers by fire into the still more destructive flames of the *law*. These were the reasons which induced me to insure with this Office, and I now find, by experience, that they were well founded.—Without more experience of another sort I cannot speak confidently as to the effect of feeding oxen with *cooked* roots. People about here ridicule the idea of feeding a score or two of oxen in such a way. They call the food *ox-pap*! And, when we consider, that a score of oxen will eat *a ton and a half* of ruta бага in a day; and that, during their fattening, they will eat, perhaps, *two hundred tons* of even this food, it does, at first sight, seem a wild scheme. But when the reader is informed, that *three* buckets of water will cook a ton; that roots, like mine, from four to fourteen pounds weight each, require *no cutting*; that the thing in which they are cooked holds three tons; that there is not a pound of *waste* in each batch; that the cattle eat them in a fourth part of the time that it would require to eat raw roots; that the *labour* required is *less* than if the feeding was with raw roots: when these facts are known, the scheme does not appear to be so very wild.—As to whether this mode of fattening cattle will perform the work in *less time*, and with a *smaller quantity* of roots than the *raw* mode, I am not, as yet, able to speak with certainty. If my opinion were asked, I should say, that I thought the former mode would save *half the time, half the food, and half the*



labour, necessary in the latter mode. If this should be the case, would not the reader think me a very weak man to be deterred from the practice by the grinning of philosophers in smock frocks, or by the fool-born jests of the Editor of a country newspaper, who, in the scale of animated nature, is barely one remove from the cattle on whose diet he has the presumption to comment?

### SPAIN

#### *In her state of Deliverance.*

It was easy to foresee, that no country in Europe would long have to rejoice at what was called the *Deliverance* of the Continent; but it was hardly to be expected, that, even in Spain, where the worst of all possible Governments has been overthrown, the deliverance would so soon have so many persons to complain of its effects. Amongst these effects the punishment of those whom we called "the Spanish Patriots," is the most striking, though by no means the most important. Some amongst us, and I for one, never called them patriots; because we never thought, that, if they succeeded in restoring Ferdinand they would do their country good. We saw, that, if the Bourbons were restored in Spain, the Monks, the Inquisition, the Mesta, and the rest of the old system would follow. We saw, that there was no middle course to be hoped for: that it must be the Bourbons and the old system entire; or, a new system, and no Bourbons.

By force of our arms and the weight of our purse, the old system entire has been restored. This is nothing to be surprized at. The only wonder is, that there are persons, who supported the war in Spain, impudent enough to affect, or foolish enough to feel, *disappointment* at what has taken place. That which has taken place was the natural, and, indeed, the almost unavoidable, consequence of the restoration of Ferdinand. What! was there any man foolish enough to suppose, that he would become a *constitutional King*? That he would be a *guardian of civil and religious liberty*? That he would be a protector of the *rights of man*? That he would become a *disciple of Sydney, Locke, and Paine*? That he would recognize, in Spain, what the Bourbons and what all our monarchical writers had declared to be abominable in France? And who, without the most flagrant inconsistency, could have censured the French Revolution, and, at the same

time, have approved of the Constitution, which the Cortes had prepared for Ferdinand? It was all scandalous hypocrisy to pretend, that the war in Spain was a war for *freedom*. It was a war for the restoration of the old Government; it has restored that Government; and it has, therefore, been attended with *complete success*.

There are persons, amongst the Opposition to our Ministers, who complain of them for having *sanctioned* what Ferdinand is now doing. This charge is very foolish and even malicious; because the Opposition expressed *their wishes for the restoration of Ferdinand*. That was the business of the Ministers. They did that, and then, of course, they had *finished their job*. The Spaniards, who acted and fought with us, wanted Ferdinand "the beloved" to be restored to them; they wanted to get rid of the *Usurper*; and these things being accomplished, they were, of course, left to themselves. They had their "beloved" restored to them; and then they were left in his "paternal" hands.

Our Ministers are blamed for not *interfering* in behalf of those "Patriots," whom the "beloved" has put in prison, and otherwise punished. But in what way are they to *interfere*? Are they to tell the King of Spain how he is to rule his people? Are they to dictate laws and modes of trial in Spain? Are they to take, in short, the Government of Spain out of the hands of her beloved Monarch, and thus do what Joseph did? If those, who spoke and who fought with us against Joseph find themselves *disappointed*; if they feel the weight of *chains* where they expected the gentle pressure of *ribbons* and *stars*, they have *themselves* to thank for it. They freely chose Ferdinand in preference to Joseph, who had put down the Inquisition, the Monks and the Mesta. They declared, that Ferdinand was their *lawful sovereign*; that they owed him *unalterable allegiance*; that it was the duty of all Spaniards to fight in the cause of his restoration; that Spain could never be happy without him. And, after all this, shall they *complain* that we do not *interfere* in *their behalf* against him?

The case of the two persons arrested at Gibraltar, and delivered up to the Spanish Government, has been made ground of complaint here; but, in my opinion, without reason, by those who were for the war against Joseph. The history of this affair



is simply this:—Two gentlemen, who had been *writers* in a journal, containing matter displeasing to the Government, fearing its vengeance, go from Cadiz to Gibraltar. Sir James Duff, our Consul at Cadiz, writes to Gen. Smith, Lieutenant Governor and Commander at Gibraltar, telling him that he suspects that such persons (naming the two in question) will leave Cadiz for Gibraltar; and observes, that he does it, in order that the General may “decide what he may judge best with respect to their residence in that garri-son.” He then describes them as *sedition writers*. On the same day (the 16th of May, 1814), the Governor of Cadiz, Juan Villavicencio, writes to Gen. Smith, requesting him, in case these persons should go to Gibraltar, to seize them and send them to the Commandant General of the Spanish Camp, near Gibraltar, or to send them, at once, to Cadiz. The two persons, Don Diego Carrea and Don Antonia Puigblanc, arrive, and are seized by General Smith. The Spanish Consul at Gibraltar claimed them as Spanish subjects; General Smith gave them up to him, and he packed them off to Cadiz. General Smith justifies his conduct by an appeal to precedent. He says, that, in February last, four Spaniards having come to Gibraltar from Ceuta, and who being demanded as *State prisoners*, were, at once, sent back to Ceuta by General Campbell, then Lieutenant-Governor of Gibraltar.

Now, reader, observe, that this precedent took place when Spain was under the government of those whom Ferdinand has put down and is punishing. Is not this *Measure for Measure*? And, was not General Smith to do, at the request of Ferdinand's government, that which his predecessor had done at the request of the government of our friends the Cortes? Surely a better precedent could not have been found. It was doing towards the “Patriots” just what the “Patriots” had caused to be done towards their opponents. But, it is said, by some, that those persons, whom General Campbell sent back, were “*State Prisoners*.” How does that alter the case? They were, in other words, persons accused of offences against the State; and so were these two, whom General Smith gave up; only these two had not yet been actually put into prison by Ferdinand, while those who fled from the “Patriots,” had been put into prison. If the offences of these two men

were less than the offence of the “*State Prisoners*,” they were not sent back to a prison, as the others were. And if their offences were such as to cause them to be put into prison when sent back to Cadiz, surely there was as good reason to send them back as *State Prisoners*, as there was to send back those whom General Campbell sent back? I am not, mind, justifying the act; I am only shewing, that, if the “Patriots” feel, they made others feel in just the same way before. I am only shewing, that the act of General Smith was of exactly the same sort, full as agreeable to the laws of free nations; full as just; full as merciful; full as consistent with the feelings of humanity, as the act of General Campbell; and that, as the conduct of the latter had not been disapproved of, the former might naturally look upon it as quite safe to follow his example.

The *Times* newspaper, nettled at the sweet proof which the restoration of Ferdinand has produced of the blessed fruits of the long war in Spain, observes, that we were in February last, in alliance with the Government of Spain. And were we not in May last? Were we not, at that time, paying subsidies to Ferdinand? Are we not in alliance with Ferdinand? Is not the Regent now sending out the *Order of the Garter* to this “beloved” Sovereign of the Spaniards?

And what does Lord Bathurst say to General Smith upon the subject? We shall do well to see the whole of his letter. It is as follows:—“It has been represented to me, that you have delivered up to the Governor of Cadiz, certain persons, subjects of his Catholic Majesty, on the requisition of the Governor, without any previous communication with his Majesty's Ambassador at the Court of Madrid; it is further stated, that these persons were not charged with having committed murder, or any other atrocious crime; but that the only reason alleged for your being required to give them up, was, that they opposed the political system which the Spanish Government have thought proper to adopt, since the return of King Ferdinand the VIIth to Madrid.—I am unwilling to believe that this representation is correct: but as there may be some foundation for it, I must desire that you will furnish me with any correspondence which may have passed between you and the Governor of Cadiz, or any agent of the Spanish Go-



"vernment, upon this subject.—That you may not be misled at any time by the urgency with which it is possible similar requisitions may be made to you, I have received the commands of his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, that you uniformly decline giving up to the Spanish Government any person who may have taken refuge in Gibraltar, without a previous communication with his Majesty's Ambassador at the Court of Madrid."—What is this? Here is nothing condemning the principle of such seizing and giving up. Here is no representation against it, as hostile to any principle of public law. Here is no censure of the practice generally. But merely an admonition to consult with our Ambassador before any act of the sort is committed in future. Here is, indeed, a tacit acknowledgment, that we have the right to surrender whom we please. The present act is censured merely on the ground of its inexpediency. If the English Ambassador is of opinion, that persons should be given up, it is here plainly meant, that they may be given up, let what consequences will follow.

Besides, how does the *Times* newspaper reconcile its censure of General Smith with its doctrines respecting *Englishmen in America*, or on board of *American ships*? It has called the American Government by all sorts of vile names, because it would not seize and give up deserters from our ships. It justifies the practice of seizing and carrying away by force any British subject, found in an American ship, in time of peace. So that, supposing a "seditious writer," in time of peace with America, to be going from England to America, he can, according to the *Times* newspaper, be lawfully seized, even in the harbour of New York, and brought back to England. If he can be seized and forced away, surely he may be given up; and, if given up in a ship, why not in a fortress?

To return to the situation of the Spaniards, it is stated in the public prints here, that the nation is now most grievously oppressed. But I do not find, that Ferdinand has done any thing more than restore. He has restored every thing. He is going on as fast as he well can to make Spain what it was before Napoleon entered it. He is putting up all that Napoleon pulled down. The Spaniards, Mr. Alderman Birch told his fellow-citizens, were fighting with us for their homes and their holy altars. They have got them,

and the Holy Inquisition along with them. And yet, we seem not to be pleased! We are a strange "thinking people."

We are a people very hard to please; for, while we find fault with the King of Spain for having gone too far in the work of counter-revolution, we find fault with the King of France, or with the French people, for not going far enough in the same way. There we want to see the *Seigneuries*, the *tythes*, and all restored. We want to see restored there every abuse, every oppressive institution and regulation; all the whole of that despotism, for submitting to which we formerly called the French slaves. In short, the writers, who thus meddle with the affairs of France and Spain, wish to see both nations reduced to slavery and misery, and every other nation upon the face of the earth. They are never easy if there be any people enjoying, or likely to enjoy, freedom from plunder and oppression.—Their reasons for this, I love my health too well to state here; but I will find the means of stating them, or causing them to be stated, and in print too, in spite of every thing that can be done to prevent it. These enemies of the happiness of nations; these defenders of plunder and oppression in all countries; these corrupt miscreants are displeased with Ferdinand, because he has not acted the part of a hypocritical despot; because he has, at once, come back plumb to the mark; because he has made even our partizans cry out; because he has given to the world so complete and striking a proof of the difference between his Government and that of Napoleon. This, and this only, is the cause of their displeasure at his acts.

Well! there let the Spaniards remain; let them enjoy all the benefits of having *Grandees*, *Seigneurial Courts*, the *Mesta*, the *Monks* and the *Inquisition*. Yet the invasion of Spain by Napoleon, whatever his intentions might have been, has been productive of one great benefit to mankind. It may lead to the emancipation of South America; but it has stocked North America with *fine-wooled sheep*; it has enabled eight or ten millions of free men not only to make their own woollens, but to export wool, and that, too, as good as ever grew in Spain. This, of itself, is a great revolution in the affairs of the world. It will be a great cause of intercourse with the American Republic; and if that Republic retain the principles on which it was founded, tyranny in no part of Europe is safe.—



There will, in spite of every thing that despots of all sorts can do, always be an asylum for the oppressed; always a great and striking example of the happiness enjoyed by those who choose their own rulers, and amongst whom bribery and corruption are unknown.

#### AMERICA.

MR. COBBETT.—It appears from the negotiations at Ghent, that we have demanded a new boundary line; that the Republicans shall give up part of their territory, including those Lakes, whereon, it is said, they have *defeated* us. As to the Americans having defeated us, I do not believe a word of it; it must be all false; it is impossible that those poor ragged Republicans should defeat a brave, rich, learned people, like us, who live under a Constitution of King, Lords, and Commons. Nobody believes it but the enemies to our Government, the Jacobins and Levellers, who would overturn social order, and our holy religion. But it seems these wretched Republicans, these American vermin, are not willing to accept our *modest* proposals. Nothing will do, I see plainly; nothing will do, but utterly to destroy these rascals; there must not be left a man alive among them; not one, not a single individual; they are not fit to live; not fit to breathe the same air that we breathe; not fit to walk on the same globe. What right have they to property or territory? Are they not *Republicans*? Have they not a pure Representation? And are they not a nest of *Atheists*? Why, the poor wretches have no *established religion*, no bishops, no tythes, and no rates. It is not easy to conceive of a people in a more contemptible condition, and yet they have the *matchless impudence* to refuse to give up a *part only* of their territory, including those Lakes, whereon, it is said, and falsely said, they have defeated us. I expect, then, to see shortly these *infidels* completely annihilated, by the naval and military power of Great Britain, whose cause, as Mr. Ponsonby is reported to have said in the House of Commons, has always been that of *justice* and of *liberty*; and thus, I trust, we shall maintain our *noble* character to the very last. That we can easily accomplish this task, no one but an enemy to social order and our holy religion will dare to doubt, or question. I shall rejoice at this event, as being one of the happiest, most reli-

gious, most humane, and most truly moral, that ever took place since the creation of the world. As for you, Mr. Cobbett, though I do not wish to be personal, yet I tell you frankly, that you are not a bit better than Mr. Madison himself, who will shortly be deposed.—Your's, &c.

Dec. 1814.

F.

SIR,—You have probably read, in the *Times* of Saturday, a report of the debates in the Common Council on the subject of the Property Tax; whence we learn, that an Aldermanic orator, adverting to this sanguinary American war, from which flow such quantities of blood and tears, observed, he hoped to see the Americans "*confoundedly flogged*," before the contest should terminate. How Sir Wm. Curtis acquired his imputed great maritime knowledge, I pretend not to know; probably in his toy-shop of a yacht, so highly celebrated for turtle, and vulgar gormandizing. But I could, in truth, venture to assure this civic Demosthenes, that could his *delicate feelings* but permit him to enter the public-houses, in the immediate vicinage of Wapping-docks and the Tower, and ask for a pint of beer, he would hear the expression of sentiments, and "*doctrines*," about being "*confoundedly flogged*," which might, perhaps, at once astound and undeceive him. At least, to my understanding, they appear eminently opposed to those held by our most *eminent* civilians. Whether they are "*sound*," or unsound, is a question I am unequal to discuss.—I am, God knows, Sir, no politician, (though the class is so numerous) but humbly presume this worthy Alderman would acquire a far more *sound* title to the gratitude of his country, and the loud pleadings of suffering humanity, were he to exert his *weighty* influence in effecting "a speedy peace, and soon."—I beg you to excuse this intrusion, and am, with very great respect, &c.

A CONSTANT READER.

Westminster, Dec. 12, 1814.

#### CHEAP BREAD AND HIGH TAXES.

SIR,—I have waited with considerable anxiety, in the expectation that some measures would have been taken, at the late Parliamentary Meeting, for the protection, or rather relief, of the farming interests; by which, however, I would be understood to desire the *general good*, rather than the benefit of any particular class. It must be evident to every man in the least con-



versant with farming, that to grow corn, under the present circumstances, is to court certain ruin, for it needs no demonstration to understand, that, with our rents, rates, tythes, and taxes, direct as well as indirect, occasioning an immense expence in labour, &c. we cannot grow it for so little as *double* the price at which it can be grown where there are no tythes, no material rents, or taxes, and where labour is consequently far more reasonable than with us. There are, therefore, evidently only two paths which our Government, under such circumstances, can pursue: the one is to pass a law prohibiting the importation of foreign corn, except at certain high prices, which would be manifestly unjust towards the population of this country: the other to reduce the expences attendant on British agriculture to a level with those of other countries. Now, Sir, it appears to me that for the Government to say to the people of this country, the moment that peace (after a war of long misery and great deprivations) is attained; to say to them that they shall not buy *cheap bread*, though it is so eaten over the whole world besides, and though the farmers and governors of those countries are cheerfully so tendering it to us; to say to them that they shall eat it at double or three times the price to enable the farmer to pay his taxes to Government, would be a language that they neither could or would understand. The interests of the belly, Sir, are well known to be far stronger even than Borough interests, and, with the bulk of the people, supersede all other considerations. In this case no doubt justly, for it was not the bulk of the people that made the late war, nor was it made for their benefit, nor have they derived any whatever from it. It was a war for crowns, and kingdoms, nobility, property, and old establishments. Thus it is that the bulk of the people argue, whose labour and whose sweat continue to be, and whose blood has been, so severely taxed. The Government is aware of that feeling, and if they attempt a Bill of that sort it will not be without fear and trembling; and, in my opinion, though still strong in regulars and militia, it will not pass. On the other hand, Sir, it is well understood to be the first and most important duty of every Government, if possible, to cause to be raised food within itself sufficient for the consumption of its population; (witness the late fatal case of Norway) other-

wise in times of scarcity in those countries whence the necessary supplies are derived, or in war, we should be entirely at their mercy, and reduced to the most dependant and humiliating condition. It appears to me, then, that ultimately all tythes, taxes, and other expences, including a large portion of present rents, which bear on and oppress agriculture, must be removed; and I am the more confirmed in this opinion, because it is evident that, with the equal skill obtained in manufactures by rival and neighbouring nations, it is necessary our manufacturers should be fed as cheaply as theirs are, or we cannot, by any possible means, compete with them in foreign markets. To depend on our machinery, or superior capitals, is manifestly absurd, because the experience of ages, as well as of every hour, teaches us that capital and industry will always study their own interests, and will pass with incredible rapidity to those countries whence most advantage is to be derived from their employment. A little delay will, I think, prove the truth of my assertions. Capital will emigrate as our population, noble, gentle, and simple, are now doing; depriving the country of their contributions, and leaving to those who remain, the agreeable task of making good the deficit occasioned by their absence. I confess the system has its difficulties; to withdraw the revenues now raised from the land, will make a great hole in the ways and means, particularly during the continuance of this blessed American war. But to continue them would as evidently, in a very short space of time, make a much greater. Our period of difficulty, long foreseen, and long since, and often foretold, is at length arrived. Our public credit totters; our stock-holders, our dependants on Government, and even our Government itself, may be compared to a huge pyramid reversed, which the lapse of time, and neglect and abuse, has undermined. Skillful hands may preserve it upright for awhile, but no certainty exists; and when it falls, "great will be the fall thereof." I am, &c. A FARMER.

Dec. 3, 1814.

#### LIBERTY OF THE PRESS AND FREE ENQUIRY.

"Sophistry may perplex truth, ingenuity may warp the decrees of justice, and ridicule may raise an undeserved laugh; but where free enquiry prevails, errors will be corrected;



injustice will be reversed; and ridicule will be retorted on those who abuse its influence."

"The first object in a free State is to preserve the liberty of the subject, and the chief security for freedom is the *Liberty of the Press*."

*ENSOR's "Independent Man."*

MR. COBBETT,—I have selected the above quotation, or motto, from a modern work of much celebrity, to give sanction to the subject of this letter, which appears to me of more consequence in proportion as school-craft, state-craft, and priest-craft are promoted and extended. I was in hopes, from the public expression which you saw evinced towards Daniel Isaac Eaton, that we should not have had another instance of persecution to have disgraced the history of this "thinking and enlightened nation."—But I find that Mr. George Houston is sentenced to two years imprisonment, and a fine of two hundred pounds, for being the author of a book entitled *Ecce Homo*, which the late Mr. Eaton published. From my personal knowledge of Eaton, and the continual expressions of zeal he always used upon subjects connected with the *Liberty of the Press*, I was much surprised that he should have given up the author of this work. But when, to my sorrow, I recollect, that he was *eight* times *ex-officioed*, his age, his infirmities, his poverty, and the times in which he lived, I freely confess there is more cause for my wonder that reason found in him such a bold and steady advocate, and the *Press*, that engine more powerful than gold, such a firm supporter. Alas, Sir! where shall we now find, in the dominions of the House of Brunswick, another "*Ratiocinatory, or Magazine for Truth and Good Sense*."—It is ridiculous to boast of the *Liberty of the Press*, with these instances of punishment upon record for matters of opinion; and it is the height of hypocrisy to hold ourselves forth as the advocates of truth, and as examples of charity and benevolence, whilst we supinely pass over such events without censure. In vain may we plume ourselves on the *refinements* of science, "the blessed comforts" of social order, and our holy religion," whilst we hourly manifest a disposition to burn unbelievers like straw. It is true the faggot and the stake are laid aside; but banishment, fine, and imprisonment, punishments more revolting, because more cruel and degrading to the human mind, are daily substituted in its place.—Nor will this policy want advocates and sup-

porters, as long as it is thought a *duty* "to honour and obey the King, and all that are put in authority under him; to submit ourselves to all our governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters, to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters," as well as (a fundamental doctrine in religion) to *fear God*.—Those whom we choose to call Pagans, knew better, whilst Seneca, and him whose name I assume, *taught* differently. You have often very properly drawn the attention of your readers to the *Liberty of the Press* in this country, and you have shewn that, on all other topics but politics and religion, the "two only generally necessary" to salvation, without either baptism or supping with the Lord, we are very well off. But on these subjects, which ought to be the chief of our thoughts, I do not conceive it possible to be worse. Occasionally we find an individual bold enough to offer to our frigid faculties, ideas calculated to interest our minds, enlighten our understandings, and warm and exhilarate our hearts; but these, like a too early sunshine in the uncertain solstice, only bring forth fruits to be speedily cut off—their beauties, and their qualities wasted, and the spot to be no longer interesting than containing their untimely remains mouldering into dust. A work of this description is now before me, entitled "*Materials for Thinking*," by William Burdon, from which I transcribe part of the last chapter, requesting a speedy insertion. It alludes particularly to this subject. This work ought to be generally circulated and read, for in the short preface we are informed, that "the great purpose of the present undertaking is to lessen the effect of prejudice, diffuse the comforts of society; and, if he should contribute to keep alive discussion, and induce some few among mankind to adopt more liberal principles of conduct, his intentions will be fully answered."

VARRO.

"REMARKS ON THE BIBLE SOCIETIES.—In committing this part of my book to the public, which contains a direct attack upon the divine authority of the Scriptures, I feel that I am liable to some small risque of adding another martyr to the cause of truth, and I have a recent example of persecution before my eyes in the punishment of D. I. Eaton, sufficient to terrify men of stouter nerves than myself; but I cannot, I will not believe, that, at this enlightened period, it can be considered



criminal to discuss the merits of a book by some held sacred, provided the discussion be conducted with decency and moderation; yet even were the utmost scurrility, vulgarity, and abuse employed to render it contemptible, surely they who are convinced of its divine origin, can never fear the use of any *human* means to degrade it in the eyes of the world; for if the arguments by which it is assailed are unsound, they may be repelled by sounder arguments; and as to abuse, if it ever does harm, it can only be for a season, and will ultimately recoil upon those who employ it. At any rate, if the religion I have proposed to examine is from God, no effort of mine, nor of any other man, can destroy it; for God will defend his own with a power which no human efforts can successfully oppose.—Man may be strong, but God must be stronger; and, according to the *Heathen* maxim, FATE IS STRONGEST OF ALL.—A less period than fifty years, I trust, will give to infidels of all descriptions, the utmost liberty to profess their opinions. Religion may suffer from such a toleration, but *morality* can never suffer from the utmost freedom of discussion; for morality is founded on the common interest of mankind, which will always prove its best protection; and even Christianity, so far as it is practicable, whatever may become of its doctrines, will maintain itself as a system, or rule of conduct, while it is found consistent with *general utility*. But to give it a fair trial, it must have no *external* support from *fear* or *interest*. The sole motive by which I have been actuated in this and all other writings against Christianity, is to make men *more reasonable*; and surely no one can be a greater benefactor to his species than he who teaches them to exercise their reason. Implicit belief is the parent and preserver of error, and, what is most extraordinary, it generally assumes the appearance of reason; for men oftener employ that faculty to defend their belief than to examine it, and therefore there can be no greater bar to the improvement of reason, than the restraints laid upon it by religion."

After a fair and dispassionate review of the various books of the Bible and Testament, and the forms of worship in the prayer book, Mr. Burdon observes, "I believe if the Bible can be read *impartially*, without any preconceived notions, the morality it contains will find its way to the *unperverted* understandings of all men,

while its doctrines will be left only to puzzle divines. Let the Bible, therefore, be disseminated as widely as possible, without gloss or comment, and even if it sometimes does harm, it will do much good; for there is no book extant of its size which contains more entertaining history, or more useful morality. But never let it be *forced* upon any description of people; let all nations have the means of reading it, if they will, but let no *undue means* be used to put it in the hands of those who have no wish for it. The English nation is the most combustible, the most easily set on fire, of any nation upon earth; and as a proof of this, it is truly ridiculous to see the prevalence of *fashion* in the increase of Bible Societies. I am far from wishing to discountenance or ridicule the Bible; for, when read *without religious bias*, it cannot fail to be useful; but to see men of all ranks and descriptions, of the most opposite habits, sentiments, and persuasions, uniting to cram the Bible down the throats of all nations, people, and languages, with indiscriminating violence; to see men the most profligate in their private conduct, the most open despisers of religion in their lives and conversation; men who have never read one word of the Bible since they were at school, and hardly know what it contains; to see all these men, and women too, hurrying to subscribe to what in their hearts they care not a farthing about, is just as ridiculous as to see them crowding to a ball or a masquerade.—By those who are unwisely sanguine as to the improvement of human nature, the Lancasterian system of education is held up as the *panacea*, or universal remedy, for all the evils of society; and we are very confidently told, both by christians and philosophers, that when all men are taught to read and write there will be no more crimes, no more vice, no more misery in the world! Believing, as I firmly do, that these things are inherent in the system, as correctives of the great original defect, I am not so earnest in my hopes of general melioration, or so sanguine as many of my friends in believing that we have arrived at the commencement of a *new era*; for I do believe, that, even after all men, women, and children are taught to write, there will still be much vice and misery in the world. Nevertheless I will cheerfully contribute my mite towards the expense of educating the children of the



poor, and also my opinion as to further improvement in educating the rich, for all the *views of society* are not to be found in the *lower ranks*."—*Materials for Thinking*. 3d Edit.

## ON RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION.

### LETTER II.

"Religion by compulsion is no longer religion; it must be by persuasion, and not by constraint. Religion is under no control, and cannot be directed by power."

LACTANTIUS, *LB. 3.*

SIR,—BURTON, in his admirable chapter on *Liberty of Sentiment*, says, "The experience of the world sufficiently proves, that there are hardly any opinions in themselves destructive of the peace of society; it is not opinions which do harm, but the *opposition* to them; many errors, which would have withered away before the light of time and reason, have grown strong and vigorous by being encountered, and the very force by which they were opposed has destroyed many thousand lives, and left the opinions which it meant to root out confirmed and strengthened."—Every person of common observation and reflection must, in my humble opinion, feel the propriety of these remarks. Suppose, for instance, that our Civil or Ecclesiastical Governors were to consider the venerable Mrs. Joanna Southcott an Impostor, whose pretensions and doctrines were derogatory to the honour of our holy religion; and were prompted, under that idea, to persecute her and her followers, would not that circumstance, I ask, be the means of extending her fame, causing her numerous writings, both in poetry and prose, to be more generally read; and, as they have already gained her many thousand adherents, be productive of as many thousand more; who, being excited by curiosity, and the love of novelty, so predominant in the human breast, might perhaps, like the early Christians and many of their posterity, deem the scorn and mockery of the world an infallible test of the Truth of her mission? And might not those who have been many years true believers in her doctrine, be induced to strengthen the bonds of friendship among themselves, to keep more stedfast in their faith, and adhere more strictly to the particular notions or prejudices to which they had been so long accustomed? Those who are at all acquainted with the history of past ages, or with human nature in general, must acknowledge this a reasonable calculation; as they will be well aware that persecution very rarely gains its ends, whether against political, philosophical, or religious opinions; on the contrary, it generally makes its objects more inveterate and determined

in their course. But, on the other hand, if we were to admit, for the sake of argument, that the new Millennial System of this Lady, is, in reality, a delusion, a hoax upon the public, or a cunningly devised fable, like many others in days of yore, invented to beset and rob mankind, then I would ask, whether by treating it with perfect indifference, or passing it over with silent contempt, as being too ridiculous and despicable to merit their notice, and suffering it ultimately to mar itself by its own absurdity, (with the full confidence that every species of imposture must in the end shrink before the touch of time, the impartial trier of all things) instead of raising it into undeserved importance by a passionate opposition,—it would not be likely to sink into that oblivion they wished?—I think I shall have the assent of most well informed people, to the deductions I have drawn, because their memory will remind them that no system of error or superstition, has ever existed long when neither persecuted nor supported by the civil or ecclesiastical power. Though I would by no means infer from this, that the Christian religion itself might not have been in existence at this day, if the zeal and enthusiasm of its first founders had not been stimulated and strengthened by the hardships they had to undergo, and the example of their founder; nor, on the other hand, would I argue that it owes its continuance, and its present prosperity, to its being protected by monarchical and aristocratical Governments, or, what some would profanely call, the *adulterous* union of Church and State; though John Bigland, a very able modern writer, and a sincere Christian, when endeavouring to prove the advantages of a State Religion, and to apologise for the enormous patrimony and ecclesiastical emoluments possessed by the priesthood of this country, has not hesitated to say, "That if the Church establishment had not been put upon a respectable footing, by judiciously assigning a part of the landed property of every country for its support, the Christian Religion, degraded and rendered contemptible by the abject situation of its Ministers, would, before this day, have either been totally extinguished, or have degenerated into a mass of superstitions and absurdities, which would have reduced it nearly to the level of Paganism." These extraordinary sentiments from so serious and respectable an author, present a wide scope for comment; but as I should be digressing too far from my subject, I shall leave the reader to make his own reflections, and be content with saying for myself, that I would be extremely sorry to speak thus of a religion which I believed to be of *divine origin*. No! I will never entertain co



degrading an idea that is essential to the existence and credit of our holy faith, that it should be amalgamated with the inventions of men. It is a libel upon the great Author of Nature, to suppose our religion a revelation from him for our salvation, and yet that it needs man's assistance to keep it from perishing. If I believe it an emanation from the Almighty, it will be much more consistent for me to agree with Soame Jenyns, "That pure and genuine Christianity never was, nor ever can be, the national religion of any country upon earth. It is a gold too refined to be worked up with any human Institutions without a large portion of alloy; for no sooner is the small grain of mustard seed watered with the fertile showers of civil emulments than it grows up to a large and spreading tree, under the shelter of whose branches, the birds of prey and plunder will not fail to make for themselves comfortable habitations, and thence deface its beauty and destroy its fruits." What a contrast is here, between the sentiments of the defender of Priests, and all the appendages with which they have loaded religion, and those of the advocate of Christianity in the purity and simplicity in which it is represented to have been first propagated; and how much more congenial the opinions of the latter with the idea of a system instituted by a Supreme Being—in which light, in the present instance, I mean to consider that which was taught by Jesus as the will of his Father.

If all good Christians admit the Divine origin of their religion, (and, I believe, there are none that dispute it) they must, at the same time, acknowledge that their God is capable of protecting and supporting the revelation of his commands, in whatever manner his infinite wisdom deems best, because they ascribe to the Deity, among various other attributes, those of Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Prescience. How absurd, then, by their general conduct to belie this profession of belief; for, if God is all-powerful, all-wise, and fore-knowing, how is he capable of receiving an injury? How can he want the assistance of such pigmies as men? Or when and where did he ever appoint any of us his counsellors, that we should presume to know his mind, require us to be arbiters between him and our neighbours, or executioners to destroy each other for offending him? I am aware that the learned and elegant Dr. Blackstone, in his ingenious *Apology for the Laws of England*, devotes a chapter to *Offences against God and Religion*, and enumerates the various punishments which the Legislature, in behalf of the Almighty, have thought expedient to inflict for the commission of them. But he does not state from what part of Sacred Writ they derive their authority for so doing. When we execute a murderer, or a house-breaker, we do not pretend it is because he has

offended God. We do not take his life as an atonement for his crime.—No! we are taught by our religion that he will be tormented hereafter for that. We only, from necessity, remove him from society, as a dangerous member of it, upon the same principle that we would amputate a mortified limb, and hang him up as an example of terror, to act upon the motives of man as a necessary agent, that he may be excited to obey the Laws, and deterred from the infraction of them. How presumptuous and how arrogant then are we, if we persecute a person on the score of his religion, when every precept of Christ is diametrically opposed to such conduct. Does not the Almighty act as a Father over all? Does he deal out the bounties of Nature with a more niggardly hand to the Jew, the Turk, the Persian, or the Indian, than he does to the Christian? And among the innumerable sects of Christianity, has ever evinced a partiality for any one in particular? Are they not all satisfied that he showers on them peculiar marks of his favour? Does not our Saviour tell us, that God maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth the rain on the just and on the unjust. Let me ask the furious bigot whether faith is not a gift of heaven? And if so, whether the want of it can be a vice? We did not frame our intellectual faculties, nor can we command the decision of our understanding, which is completely passive, and modified entirely by the impressions we receive from external objects. If our friends or neighbours have the misfortune to err in judgment through their confined views or prejudices, we ought kindly to argue the matter with them, using mild persuasion, and the best reason we are possessed of, instead of rancorous abuse and virulent depreciation. But should our charitable solicitude for the good of their souls ultimately prove abortive, we ought then, if we are real Christians, and have a greater respect for Jesus than for Calvin, Luther, or Arminius, to pity and pray for them, that God might give them grace, faith, and divine light, to comprehend his inscrutable mysteries, which too often confound the fallible reason of us short-sighted mortals.

"Opinions," says the author of *Materials for Thinking*, "are only of consequence as they lead to actions." And it appears that many of the most learned and pious Divines have been decidedly inimical to persons being persecuted for their religious opinions. Dr. Watson, the venerable Bishop of Landaff, who, like Dr. Blackstone, wrote a very ingenious "*Apology*," declares to Mr. Gibbon;—"It would give me much uneasiness to be reputed an enemy to free enquiry into religious matters, or capable of being animated into any degree of personal malevolence against those who differ from me in opinion. On the contrary, I look upon the right of private judgment in every concern respecting God and ourselves, as superior to the controul of human authority; and have ever regarded free discussion as the best means of illustrating the doctrine, and establishing the truth of Christianity. Let the followers of Mahomet and the zealots of the Church of Rome, support their several religious systems by damping every effort of the human intellect to pry into the foundations of their faith; but never can it become a Christian to be afraid of being asked a reason of the faith that is in him; nor a Protestant to be studious of enveloping his religion in mystery and ignorance."

Reserving my further remarks for a future opportunity, I beg leave to subscribe myself your obliged friend,

ERASMUS PERKINS.

London, 16th Dec. 1814.